

Claims

1. A method comprising:
 - detecting an online status of a user;
 - 5 determining that a first member of a group associated with the user is off-line;
 - placing a telephone call to a first telephone number associated with the first member based on said determining; and
- 10 sending a message within the telephone call, the message indicating the online status of the user.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - determining that a first-member-initiated
- 15 telephone notification option is enabled.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - determining that a second member of the group associated with the user is off-line; and
- 20 determining that a second-member-initiated telephone notification option is disabled.
4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
 - inhibiting placing a telephone call to a second
- 25 telephone number associated with the second member.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - determining that a user-initiated notification option is enabled.
- 30 6. The method of claim 1 wherein the message

comprises an audio message.

7. A method comprising:
 - detecting an online status of a user;
 - 5 determining that a user-initiated notification option is enabled;
 - determining that a first member of a group associated with the user is off-line;
 - determining that a first-member-initiated 10 telephone notification option is enabled;
 - placing a telephone call to a first telephone number associated with the first member;
 - sending an audio message within the telephone call, the audio message indicating the online status of 15 the user;
 - determining that a second member of the group associated with the user is off-line;
 - determining that a second-member-initiated telephone notification option is disabled; and 20 inhibiting placing a telephone call to a second telephone number associated with the second member.

8. A computer-readable medium whose contents direct a computer to:
 - 25 detect an online status of a user;
 - determine that a first member of a group associated with the user is off-line;
 - place a telephone call to a first telephone number associated with the first member; and
 - 30 send a message within the telephone call, the message indicating the online status of the user.

9. The computer-readable medium of claim 8
wherein the contents further direct the computer to
determine that a first-member-initiated telephone
5 notification option is enabled.

10. The computer-readable medium of claim 9
wherein the contents further direct the computer to:
determine that a second member of the group
10 associated with the user is off-line; and
determine that a second-member-initiated telephone
notification option is disabled.

11. The computer-readable medium of claim 10
15 wherein the contents further direct the computer to
inhibit placing a telephone call to a second telephone
number associated with the second member.

12. The computer-readable medium of claim 8
20 wherein the contents further direct the computer to
determine that a user-initiated notification option is
enabled.

13. The computer-readable medium of claim 8
25 wherein the message comprises an audio message.

14. A server operative to detect an online status
of a user, to determine that a first member of a group
associated with the user is off-line, to place a
30 telephone call to a first telephone number associated
with the first member, and to send a message within the

telephone call, the message indicating the online status of the user.

15. The server of claim 14 further operative to
5 determine that a first-member-initiated telephone notification option is enabled.

16. The server of claim 15 further operative to determine that a second member of the group associated 10 with the user is off-line, and to determine that a second-member-initiated telephone notification option is disabled.

17. The server of claim 16 further operative to 15 inhibit placing a telephone call to a second telephone number associated with the second member.

18. The server of claim 14 further operative to determine that a user-initiated notification option is 20 enabled.

19. The server of claim 14 wherein the message comprises an audio message.